

RESOLUTIONS

OF THE

LEGISLATURE OF PENNSYLVANIA,

*Relative to a Distribution of the Surplus Revenue of the United States
among the several States, &c.*

JUNE 21, 1836.

Read, and ordered to be printed.

RESOLUTIONS.

Whereas it is an incumbent duty constantly to guard the liberties of the people and our free institutions of Government, acquired for us by the valor and virtue of our revolutionary fathers, from the encroachment of power common to all Governments: *And whereas* the immediate representatives of the people are bound to warn them of approaching danger, and endeavor to avert it from them :

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in General Assembly met, That this Assembly will maintain and defend the constitution of the United States, the rights of the States, and the integrity of the Union, and that it solemnly expresses its devotion to that Union, and its conviction that it can be preserved only by opposing every violation of the principles upon which it is based.

That the powers of the Federal Government are defined by a written constitution, and are specifically enumerated. No power can be rightly claimed for, or be exercised by it, that is not expressly given, "and the powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Any attempt by the Federal Government, or those who administer it, to encroach upon, overawe, interfere with, or control the States in the exercise of their reserved rights, or to extend the power of the Federal Government beyond the limits expressly prescribed by the constitution of the United States, is a usurpation and infraction of those principles which constitute the only basis of our Union, and must be dangerous and fatal in its consequences.

That this General Assembly views with profound regret the spirit manifested to enlarge the powers of the General Government, and to wield those which are conferred, to obtain an influence over the States, to interfere with the domestic policy of the State Governments, to overawe and control them in the free exercise of their reserved rights, "and so

to consolidate the States by degrees into one sovereignty, the obvious tendency and inevitable result of which would be, to transform the present republican system of the United States into an absolute, or, at best, a mixed monarchy."

That this General Assembly consider the proposition lately made in the Congress of the United States to invest the surplus revenue of the nation in stocks, issued by the States, as a measure fraught with danger, calculated to give to the Federal Government a power which, if wielded by corrupt hands, would be inimical to the liberties of the country in an eminent degree, and under all circumstances injurious. It may be properly characterized as one of those measures "in fiscal systems and arrangements, which keep a host of commercial and wealthy individuals imbodied and obedient to the mandates of the Treasury," and it would give to the Federal Government a decided influence in the councils of such States as might be thought expedient to win to its purposes; it would foster and encourage a system of gambling and speculation in stocks, giving to the agents of the Government the opportunity of employing the public money to promote private interests, to reward corrupt favorites, and to acquire an interest among the community leading to servile devotion to those clothed with the power of the General Government.

If to this be added an increase of the standing army and navy beyond the necessities of the country, "which will on one hand enlist the tendency of man to pay homage to his fellow-creature who can feed and honor him, and on the other, employ the principle of fear, by punishing imaginary insurrections under the pretext of preventive justice;" and if we further have enormous expenditures of the public treasure in the construction of fortifications, necessary in a country where the Government must keep the people in subjection, but here only to be tolerated at points essential to defence from foreign foes, and if, in this course of policy "swarms of officers, civil and military, are required, who can inculcate political tenets, tending to consolidation and monarchy, both by indulgencies and severities, and can act as spies over the free exercise of human reason;" if all these measures are at once pursued by the General Government, we may well fear the tendencies to consolidation, and warn the people of approaching danger: Therefore,

Resolved, That our Senators in Congress be instructed, and our Representatives requested, to vote against any bill for investing the surplus revenue of the United States in stocks, issued or authorized by the respective States, believing "that the most safe, just and federal disposition which could be made of the surplus revenue, would be its apportionment among the several States."

Resolved, That copies of the foregoing resolutions be transmitted by the Governor to each of the Senators and Representatives from Pennsylvania in Congress, to be laid before the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

NER MIDDLESWARTH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.
THOMAS S. CUNNINGHAM,
Speaker of the Senate.

Approved, the 16th day of June, A. D. 1836.

JOS. RITNER.

[CIRCULAR.]

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER,

Harrisburg, June 17, 1836.

SIR: By direction of the Legislature, I transmit to you the accompanying resolutions of the General Assembly of this Commonwealth.

The vast and increasing accumulation of the surplus revenue of the General Government, is a subject which demands the exertion of all the patriotism and wisdom of the statesman who loves his country. I have the fullest confidence that the expressed wishes of the Legislature with regard to it, will receive due attention from the Representatives of Pennsylvania, in the councils of the nation.

I am, sir, with great respect,

Your friend, and fellow citizen,

JOS. RITNER.

HON. SAMUEL MCKEAN.

